



CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD

Meeting Minutes #700

February 15, 2007



Chairman Vernon Chong
Randal Bressette, Vice Chairman
Leo P. Burke, Board Member

Jake I. Alarid, Board Member
Alice Astafan, Board Member
Colin Shadell, Board Member

The California Veterans Board met at the VFW Hall, in Anderson, California at 3:30 PM

ROLL CALL

Present: Vernon Chong, Chairman, Member, Alice Astafan, Member, Leo Burke, Member, Colin Shadell, Member, Jake Alarid, Member

Absent: Randal Bressette, Vice-Chairman
Chairman Chong presided

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

OLD BUSINESS

A) Committees: Purpose, areas of interest, operating policies, etc.

Chairman Chong advised that the Board has consolidated the twelve existing committees into six. Each committee has identified its purpose, guidelines and operating policies.

B) Board Policies: Policy Book – review of policies and approval

Chairman Chong explained that it's mandated that the Board policies be reviewed bi-annually and were due for review at the end of 2006. This is a task of the Policy and Procedures Committee who have been reviewing them for the past two months. The following policies were discussed and voted on:

A-1 General Policy Statement - No changes were recommended.

A-2 Held for next meeting

A-3 Board Meeting Publicity

Member Astafan suggested the policy include as item number 3: "The Executive Officer shall advise the Senator(s) and Assemblymember(s) in whose district the meetings will take place, of the time, dates and location. An invitation will be extended to speak or appear before the Board."

Member Burke moved to approve this policy with the revision and Member Astafan seconded.

A-4 Appeals to the Board

Member Astafan noted that references to the Board's own counsel and presiding counsel, be struck from the policy.

Member Astafan moved to approve with the deletions, and Member Alarid seconded.

- A-4.1 Production of Records: No changes were recommended.
- A-5 Held for next meeting.
- A-6 Board Meeting Agenda Items. The sentence “It shall be the policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs that” was added directly under the word “POLICY”. Member Astafan moved to approve with addition, and Member Shadell seconded.
- A-7 Held for next meeting.
- A-8 Held for next meeting.
- A-9 Advisory Committees to the Board
Member Astafan moved to accept this policy as revised by the Committee. Member Burke seconded.
- A-10 Held for next meeting.
- A-11 Held for next meeting.
- A-12 Special Counsel to the Board: Chairman Chong moved to delete this policy. Member Astafan seconded.
- B-1 Previously deleted.
- B-2 Property Substitution: No changes were recommended.
- B-3-4-5 Previously deleted.
- B-6 Farm and Home Program Business Plan and Reports: No changes recommended.
- B-7-8 Previously deleted.
- B-9 Interest Rates: Member Alarid moved to table this policy and Member Astafan seconded.
- B-10 Unrestricted Funds: No changes recommended.
- C-1 Previously deleted.
- C-2 Held for next meeting.
- C-3 Substance Abuse Problems: Item 3, “All of” was added to the beginning of the sentence, and the word “Southern” was deleted. Member Astafan moved to approve as changed, and Member Burke seconded.
- C-4 Good Order and Discipline at Veterans Homes: No changes recommended.
- C-5 Medical Staff on Duty: No changes recommended.
- C-6 Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Funds: No changes recommended.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned 5:00 PM



CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD

Meeting Minutes #701

February 16, 2007



Chairman Vernon Chong
Randal Bressette, Vice Chairman
Leo P. Burke, Board Member

Jake I. Alarid, Board Member
Alice Astafan, Board Member
Colin Shadell, Board Member

The California Veterans Board met at the VFW Hall, in Anderson, California at 9:00 AM

ROLL CALL

Present: Vernon Chong, Chairman, Alice Astafan, Member, Leo Burke, Member, Colin Shadell, Member, Jake Alarid, Member

Absent: Randal Bressette, Vice-Chairman
Chairman Chong presided

OPENING CEREMONIES

- A) INVOCATION**
- B) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

WELCOMING REMARKS/INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Chong welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting. He then welcomed the Mayor of Redding, Dick Dickerson and asked that he make the opening remarks. The Chairman then introduced the members of the Board and provided background on each Board member. He also introduced the newest Board member Tom Moran. Chairman Chong introduced Mr. Thomas Johnson, the Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs.

Secretary Johnson welcomed the group and introduced his staff, Chief Legal Counsel Rob Wilson, Deputy Secretary of Communications, J.P. Tremblay, Audrey Sandeen, Manager of the Redding CalVet Office, and Stephen Jorgensen, Northern California Veterans Cemetery.

MINUTES

Executive Officer, Bonnie Kelly

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the minutes of the previous meeting held December 7-8, 2006. Board member Astafan moved to approve December 7-8, 2006 minutes. Board member Burke seconded.
Motion unanimously approved and carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Cleckner
Harry Hay

OLD BUSINESS

A. Policy C-13

This policy was continued for the next meeting.

B. Board Procedures

The following procedures were broken out from the Board Policy Book to be a stand alone document:

1) Board Meeting Publicity

Member Astafan suggested under item #2 that “public officials” be added.

Member Shadell moved to approve this procedure with the addition, and Member Astafan seconded.

2) Board Agenda

Member Astafan suggested combining numbers 2, 3 and 4 into one sentence.

Member Astafan moved to approve this procedure with the revision and Member Burke seconded.

3) Conduct of Appeals

Chairman Chong moved to approve this procedure, and Member Astafan Seconded.

4) Member Travel and Per Diem

Member Burke moved to approve this procedure, and Member Astafan seconded.

DEPARTMENT FORUM

A. Department Update

GLAVC Project, Redding and Fresno Veterans Homes

- Secretary Johnson updated the group on the GLAVC project noting that all of the schedules that were laid out in May 2004 are still on track. In January the walk throughs were done, and the plans were sent out to potential bidders. The first two bids have been submitted, with Lancaster being \$1 Million under the estimate, and the bid for Ventura, \$2.5 Million under the estimate. A match was done with the general contractors and the DVBE alliance, upping the ante from a 3% goal to 5%, and indications are that we’ve achieved the 5% in Ventura, but not in Lancaster. The West Los Angeles bid will be coming in by March 18. A tabulated bid will then be sent in to Washington where the bids will be reviewed. The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Government to receive their federal funds will take place, and then the award will be made for the contract to the appropriate bidders. There will be a meeting in Fresno and Redding sometime in the beginning of April to update everyone regarding total monies from the State for all five projects once the bids have been tabulated and it’s been discussed with USDVA. Currently, it is the Department’s belief that adequate monies exist for all five projects.
- With regard to the separation of legislation - when it was discussed with Fresno, based upon their talks with those who were involved with the original legislation, they came to the conclusion that it would not be worth pursuing. This was because there was too much invested in the existing legislation among the legislature for changing the law. They also understood the real issue, that is the federal dollars that are the companion to the state dollars. We believe the state dollars are sufficient, but the federal dollars have to be brought in for the 65% match.

- In September, Secretary Nicholson signed a priority list of pending state home construction grant applications. There are thirty states, including California, that have projects considered priority one for a total of \$491 Million Dollars. California's projects, including the Yountville Member Services Building, which is very high on the list of life/safety, Redding, Fresno and GLAVC totals \$220 Million of the \$491 Million. In the budget for the federal government fiscal year that we are now in, which has just again been approved by continuing resolution, there is \$85 Million and we are receiving \$80 Million of it. In the proposed fiscal '08 budget, they again have \$85 Million. That is the single biggest issue, that if the federal money is not there, no state has the dollars to progress with their projects. The Department has brought this to the attention of every legislator. Our project for Fresno and Redding was facilitated in part by Assemblyman LaMalfa's legislation on design/build. We're still working with the Department of General Services on this. Dr. Johnson was in Redding in August and presented what he felt was a reasonable schedule on proceeding, but we slipped two months on that schedule. In March we will be allowed to go out with the qualifications for a Master Architect, and beginning construction in '08, with a completion in 2010. The timetable for beginning construction for Lancaster and Ventura to open in '08 and GLAVC, the end of 09, is still on track.

Cal Vet Farm and Home Loan Program

- HR 551 is the bill now before the Congress sponsored by Davis and Herger. This is the year the Secretary of the Department believes we will get it done. Veterans had to have served prior to Jan. 1, 1977 in order to be eligible for the qualified veteran mortgage bond rates, and we were seeing a diminishing number of veterans in California who were qualified. In 1984, they changed the law to say they did not want this program to continue to serve younger veterans, maintaining that it's just for the past forces. Three states, Wisconsin, Oregon and Alaska, were included in legislation, the Tax Reconciliation Act, which allowed them to continue with their program until a sunset of 2010 with a smaller cap, but it eliminated the 1977 date. California chose not to be included because the cap was too small. Our focus this year is to get rid of the 1977 date, keep the same cap of the \$340,000,000 and give it a 6% escalator. We've had co-sponsorships from a lot of California legislators, and Texas is on board. We also received a resolution supporting HR 551 from the State Director of Veterans Affairs of all states.
- The Department spoke to the tax people on the Ways and Means Committee in Washington. They are, for the first time, going to allow us to participate in the scoring evaluations. Previously, they did their own scoring on a worst case scenario and it would look to the Committee like there was way too much money. Being part of this process will greatly help the Department to move forward.

State Budget

- The Governor presented the budget in January and it's very favorable. It's a balanced budget, but there are a lot of things happening that will affect it. For example, the lower state revenue, and the budget did not project decisions being made by the receiver for the State Prison System, which is a \$400 Million problem. The biggest issue in the budget is personnel. There's two court decisions that have effected our veterans home professional, medical and health staff. The first is the Plata Decision which effected the prison health system and the salaries offered to the nurses, pharmacists and other medical professionals. The second was the Coleman Decision which effects the mental health hospitals with the additional categories such as psychologists and social workers. Those two decisions have raised the salaries of those health care professionals inordinately so that we can't compete with our veterans home staff salaries. Fortunately, there's 3.1 Million in our budget next year to impact our professional staff as a result of the Plata Decision, so that we should be able to

compete and give us a better handle on retaining and recruiting for our homes.

In regard to the Coleman Decision, there is no money in the budget for it, but there is a Spring finance letter with a request by the Personnel Administration for dollars for those departments that are effected by this Decision. There's a third category of health personnel not effected by either of these decisions, and they are the respiratory, physical, and occupational therapists. For those positions, the Department is going to have to do something on it's own. We're in the process of crunching the numbers to see what we will have to ask for in the Spring finance letter relative to those positions.

Federal Budget

- Legislators passed a continuing resolution that added \$3.4 Billion to the veterans budget. We were concerned about an anticipated increase in the per diem rates for our homes, but the added dollars will cover the increases. We are still deficient in the State Home Grant Program budget at \$85 Million, and we feel the cemetery budget that they've included in the VA of \$32 Million for construction is inadequate. There's \$150 Million queuing up for states that want cemeteries. There's additional money being put in for vet centers. There is one more vet center being put in for California which will be located in Modesto, out of the 15 that is being budgeted in the federal budget.

Homes

Yountville Coming Home Program

- Yountville has a program called "Coming Home". It's focused on returning veterans that may be in need of additional counseling, transition or recovery time. They may have been identified after they came back from Iraq or Afghanistan, who are having difficulty making the adjustment. The leadership at Yountville, along with some of the physicians have put together the Coming Home Program to address these issues. We have a private agency that's willing to grant us about \$5 Million over a 3 year period to put this program into place, hopefully by this summer. We're the first state to have such a program. The program will start out serving about 13-15 veterans and will increase to approximately 40, depending on how quickly the right staff is put together.

Alzheimer's Unit at Yountville

- The latest information the Department has is that this unit will be ready to open by June.

CDVA Strategic Plan

- This plan incorporates the Board's philosophy, as well as the Governor's, on honoring California's Veterans and how we will carry it forward. Attached to the plan is an appendices for all of the divisions of the Department on what kind of goals they will establish, and what kind of measurements they will have to ensure they're meeting those goals. This is the Department's 5 year 2007-2011 Plan.

Staff

- The Department has added a Budget Officer, and a new person in the Bond/Finance office, Jim Lowrey. The Department has been reorganized now so that the CalVet, Homes, and Veterans Services Departments will be reporting directly to the Secretary and Undersecretary.

C. Significant Legal Matters

NEW BUSINESS

A) Committee Reports

As the Vice Chair of the Legislative Committee, Member Astafan moved to proceed with a letter from the Board written on behalf of HR 551 sent to all the Representatives of California who have not yet signed off on it. Member Burke seconded the motion.

Member Astafan also advised the Board that the Legislative Committee will be meeting with the Senate and Assembly members on April 30 and May 1 to introduce themselves.

B) Proposed Policy C-14 Non-Veteran Spouses Remaining as Residents of Homes

This policy will be discussed at the next meeting.

C) Annual Report

Chairman Chong announced that the Annual Report for the Board has been submitted and signed off by the Governor. It is posted on the Board's website.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

No legislative issues were discussed.

COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 12:00 NOON.